

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 57, wherein the digital image is an image of at least a portion of a human body.
3. (Canceled)
4. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 59, wherein ~~the step of~~ storing comprises storing the annotation ~~said annotations~~ in a second file and said digital image is stored in a first file.
5. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 59, wherein ~~the step of~~ storing comprises storing the annotation ~~said annotations~~ in the same file which contains the digital image.
6. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 59, wherein ~~step of~~ storing comprises storing the annotation ~~said annotations~~ as text information.
7. (Currently amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the ~~annotations are~~ annotation is stored in an [[XML]] extensible markup language compatible format.
8. (Canceled)
9. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[8]] 57, further comprising ~~the step of~~ hierarchically organizing the annotations into logical groupings ~~pursuant to~~ based on a user defined structure.
10. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[8]] 57, wherein at least part of the annotation utilizes user defined lexicons.
11. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 58, wherein the metadata is [[also]] stored [[along]] with the ~~annotations~~ annotation.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 57, wherein the ~~annotation~~ ~~comprises a region of interest, said region of interest being~~ is defined as an area by one selected from the group consisting of: a point, a set of points, a polygon, and a polyline.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 57 wherein ~~each of the~~ ~~annotations~~ annotation can be displayed according to a predefined user grouping.

16. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 57 wherein the ~~annotations are~~ annotation is uniquely identified.

17. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 57 wherein the digital image comprises a sequence of digital images.

18. (Withdrawn) A method for interactively displaying annotations linked to a digital image, the annotations stored as vector information, said method comprising the steps of:

selecting and displaying the digital image on a display; and

generating a graphical user interface on the display to accept user preferences, said graphical user interface allowing a user to toggle on and off any grouping of the annotations through the graphical user interface, the annotations being visible when toggled on and hidden from view when toggled off.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein the digital image is a raster based image.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein the graphical user interface further allows a user to activate and deactivate spatial contextual labels.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein the graphical user interface allows a user to pan the digital image and zoom in and out.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein the graphical user interface allows a user to toggle on and off annotations from a particular author.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein the graphical user interface allows a user to toggle on and off annotations from a particular specialty.

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein the groupings are predefined by the user.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein the digital image remains in a substantially unaltered format.

26. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein said annotations comprise at least one member selected from the group consisting of a region of interest, a pointer, a symbol, a caption, a label and an abbreviation.

27. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 26 wherein the annotations comprise entries from a previously defined lexicon.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[28]] 59, wherein the ~~annotations are saved~~ annotation is stored in a format that can be electronically queried.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[32]] 58 wherein the metadata comprises at least one selected from the group consisting of: the name of the author or creator of ~~each of the annotations~~ annotation, a date indicating when the annotation was created ~~added to the digital image~~, a title, a subject, a description, and an area of specialty of the author or creator.

35. (Withdrawn) A method for managing digital images, said method comprising:
inputting annotations for each of the digital images;
saving each of the annotations in a textual format linked to the digital image such that the digital image remains substantially unaltered;

generating a query, said query querying the annotations;

retrieving the appropriate annotations and their linked digital images, if any, in response to the query; and

displaying the retrieved digital images and their associated annotations.

36. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 35 wherein the step of inputting annotations comprises defining a region of interest on each of the associated digital images.

37. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 35 further comprising the step of hierarchically grouping the annotations pursuant to a user defined structure and the step of generating a query utilizing said user defined structure.

38. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 35 wherein the step of displaying the retrieved digital images comprises the step of interactively displaying the annotations associated with the retrieved digital images.

39. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 38 wherein the annotations can be toggled on and off, said annotations being visible when toggled on and hidden from view when toggled off.

40. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 39 wherein annotations can be displayed pursuant to a hierarchal grouping.

41. - 56. (Canceled)

57. (New) A method of visually annotating a digital image, the method comprising:
presenting a digital image in a user interface of a display;

receiving information defining a region of interest identified by a user interacting with the presented digital image;

receiving textual information associated with the received information, wherein an annotation comprises the received information and the received textual information;

presenting the digital image overlaid with the received information and the received textual information;

presenting a plurality of annotation indicators in the user interface, an annotation indicator of the plurality of annotation indicators including the received textual information associated with the annotation;

receiving a selection of a first annotation indicator of the presented plurality of annotation indicators; and

presenting the digital image without the received information and the received textual information associated with the received selection.

58. (New) The method of claim 57, further comprising defining metadata associated with the annotation.

59. (New) The method of claim 57, further comprising electronically storing the annotation as vector based information linked to the digital image.

60. (New) The method of claim 57, wherein the textual information includes a symbol and a label.

61. (New) The method of claim 60, further comprising presenting the symbol or the label adjacent the defined region of interest in the user interface based on a user selection.

62. (New) The method of claim 60, wherein the textual information further includes a caption.

63. (New) The method of claim 57, further comprising receiving pointer information associated with the received information, wherein an annotation further comprises the received pointer information.

64. (New) The method of claim 63, wherein the received pointer information includes secondary information related to the received information.

65. (New) The method of claim 64, further comprising presenting the secondary information in the user interface based on activation of a hot-spot associated with a pointer created in the user interface based on the received pointer information.

66. (New) The method of claim 57, further comprising:

receiving second information defining a second region of interest identified by the user interacting with the presented digital image;

receiving second textual information associated with the received second information, wherein a second annotation comprises the received second information and the received second textual information; and

associating the annotation and the second annotation with a first annotation group.

67. (New) The method of claim 66, further comprising:

receiving a selection of the first annotation group to present overlaid on the displayed digital image; and

presenting the digital image with the annotation and the second annotation.

68. (New) A device for visually annotating a digital image, the device comprising:

a processor; and

a computer memory operably coupled to the processor, the computer memory comprising programming code that, upon execution by the processor, performs operations comprising

presenting a digital image in a user interface of a display;

receiving information defining a region of interest identified by a user interacting with the presented digital image;

receiving textual information associated with the received information, wherein an annotation comprises the received information and the received textual information;

presenting the digital image overlaid with the received information and the received textual information;

presenting a plurality of annotation indicators in the user interface, an annotation indicator of the plurality of annotation indicators including the received textual information associated with the annotation;

receiving a selection of a first annotation indicator of the presented plurality of annotation indicators; and

presenting the digital image without the received information and the received textual information associated with the received selection.

69. (New) The device of claim 68, wherein the programming code further performs operations comprising:

receiving second information defining a second region of interest identified by the user interacting with the presented digital image;

receiving second textual information associated with the received second information, wherein a second annotation comprises the received second information and the received second textual information; and

associating the annotation and the second annotation with a first annotation group.

70. (New) The device of claim 69, wherein the programming code further performs operations comprising:

receiving a selection of the first annotation group to present overlaid on the displayed digital image; and

presenting the digital image with the annotation and the second annotation.

71. (New) A computer memory comprising programming code therein that, upon execution by a processor, causes a computer to:

present a digital image in a user interface of a display;

receive information defining a region of interest identified by a user interacting with the presented digital image;

receive textual information associated with the received information, wherein an annotation comprises the received information and the received textual information;

present the digital image overlaid with the received information and the received textual information;

present a plurality of annotation indicators in the user interface, an annotation indicator of the plurality of annotation indicators including the received textual information associated with the annotation;

receive a selection of a first annotation indicator of the presented plurality of annotation indicators; and

present the digital image without the received information and the received textual information associated with the received selection.

72. (New) The computer memory of claim 71, wherein the programming code further causes the computer to define metadata associated with the annotation.

73. (New) The computer memory of claim 71, wherein the programming code further causes the computer to store the annotation as vector based information linked to the digital image.

74. (New) The computer memory of claim 71, wherein the textual information includes a symbol and a label.

75. (New) The computer memory of claim 74, wherein the programming code further causes the computer to present the symbol or the label adjacent the defined region of interest in the user interface based on a user selection.

76. (New) The computer memory of claim 74, wherein the textual information further includes a caption.

77. (New) The computer memory of claim 71, wherein the programming code further causes the computer to receive pointer information associated with the received information, wherein an annotation further comprises the received pointer information.

78. (New) The computer memory of claim 77, wherein the received pointer information includes secondary information related to the received information.

79. (New) The computer memory of claim 78, wherein the programming code further causes the computer to present the secondary information in the user interface based on activation of a hot-spot associated with a pointer created in the user interface based on the received pointer information.

80. (New) The computer memory of claim 71, wherein the programming code further causes the computer to:

receive second information defining a second region of interest identified by the user interacting with the presented digital image;

receive second textual information associated with the received second information, wherein a second annotation comprises the received second information and the received second textual information; and

associate the annotation and the second annotation with a first annotation group.

81. (New) The computer memory of claim 80, wherein the programming code further causes the computer to:

receive a selection of the first annotation group to present overlaid on the displayed digital image; and

present the digital image with the annotation and the second annotation.